

THE NONAGON



FALL - 1981

NEW HAMPSHIRE NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION

TRIBUTE TO SYLVESTER SAGE CROSBY, BORN SEPT. 2, 1831 IN CHARLESTOWN, N. H.

Contributed by Robert I. Wester, Suncook, and dedicated to J.D. FERGUSON, his ANA sponsor.

OBITUARY



Sylvester Sage Crosby

It would be exceedingly difficult to overstate the case for the collector-student historian, Sylvester Sage Crosby. Born Sept. 2, 1831, in Charlestown, N.H., the last of 11 children of the town's longstanding Congregational minister, he learned watch making as a profession, removing to Boston in his twenties and establishing himself there in that trade. A collector since 1857, he became in the years following the Civil War an exceptional "amateur" authority on many facets of the hobby, largely overshadowed since by virtue of his monumental contributions to the early numismatic history of America.

A founding member of the New England Numismatic and Archaeological Society from its organization April 6, 1866, he became that organization's first curator, in which position he served for three years before becoming a vice president. A religious devotee to the group's monthly meetings, he frequently presided, invariably astounded his fellows with an amazing array of rare pieces in all

series, ancient and modern, patterns and medals, Oriental and European, and ultimately was called upon to chair the organization's committee charged with producing a definitive study of American Colonials.

From its inception in 1869, the project appeared star-crossed. One by one his "committee" fell by the wayside, leaving to him alone the heavy burden of producing the projected 10-part compendium. He stuck to the task with a fervor and dedication, painstakingly assembling background material from both sides of the Atlantic, engaging in active correspondence with a host of collectors, and devoting his immense energies in systematically examining his own incomparable collection, supplemented by specimens from elsewhere. When ultimately completed six years later, the task compassed 12 numbers, illustrated by superior plates and bearing witness to his exemplary scholarship and the heavy burden—financial and otherwise—he was forced to bear. The completed work electrified collectors, though not financially successful.

His *Early Coins of America* and companion epic on the coppers of 1793, supplemented by his investigations of the Fugios, Sommer Islands and other issues are monumental achievements, making his footsteps "a steep hill to climb." Elected a corresponding member of the American Numismatic Society Apr. 22, 1869, accorded a resident membership in the Boston Numismatic Society June 3, 1869, awarded honorary memberships in the ANS March 21, 1876 and in the American Numismatic Association Sept. 4, 1907, elected to the latter's "Hall of

Fame" in 1970, and selected as the only American of the six numismatic scholars whose names were cut into the frieze of the front facade of the 1930 addition to the ANS headquarters, he made numismatics a bright strand in the fabric of man's achievements as an adjunct to history. An avid amateur archeologist and astronomer, who pastimes included the cultivation of mushrooms, he died of "stomach" trouble at his home in Cambridge, Mass., Aug. 18, 1914. A man for whom numismatic artifacts were "objects of his desire, solicitude and care."

Shown below is a family photo of the Crosby's in front of their Charlestown N.H. home which burned in 1864. Sylvester Sage Crosby is standing, fifth from the right in the back row. His father died soon after the fire.

Sylvester's first wife died Oct. 26, 1874 and was buried in the same lot as Sylvester and his 2nd wife.



NEW OFFICERS ELECTED
AT ANNUAL MEETING

New Hampshire Numismatic Association officers elected March 30, 1981 are Fred McPhail, President, Keene; Paul Hojlo, Nashua, 1st Vice president; Paul Battazoni, Chelmsford, 2nd Vice President; secretary-treasurer, James Rolston, Greenland; and corresponding secretary-editor, Wayne Rich, Concord.

Mrs. Yolande Dame, bourse chairman, reported profit of \$1002.13 on the show with 75% going to the host Nashua Club and 25% to the NENA. A donation of \$50. was received from auctioneer Fred McPhail. \$75 was appropriated for New Hampshire Day at the 1982 ANA Convention on Boston and \$75 for NENA Day at 1982 New England Numismatic Association Convention, Merrimac, N.H.

NENA MEDAL DESIGN CONTEST

The New Hampshire Numismatic Assn. is searching for a design for the reverse of the 1982 New England Numismatic Association convention medal. Everyone is invited to participate in a design contest. Artistic ability is not a necessity as the judges will be looking primarily for the design idea. Contest rules are as follows:

1. Submit entry on white paper, preferably 8 x 10 inches, placing your design in a 3 inch circle in the center of the paper.
2. Use either pencil or black ink to draw your design.
3. Design should include wording: "38TH NENA CONFERENCE, MERRIMACK, N.H. NOV. 12, 13, 14, 1982."
4. Place your name and address on the bottom of your entry.
5. All entries must be received at NENA, P.O. Box 37, Greenland, N.H. 03840 by Dec. 1, 1981.
6. Decision of judges is final, subject to approval by NENA Board of Directors.

Prizes will be awarded so start on your entry now before you forget.

TRI-STATE COLLECTORS' EXHIBITION
OCT. 17-18, CONCORD COMMUNITY CTR.

The 26th annual Tri-State Collectors' Exhibition is scheduled from 10 A.M. to 9 P.M. Oct. 17 and 10 to 5 P.M. Oct. 18 in Concord Community Center, 39 Green St., Concord, N.H. Many fine trophies are offered for exhibits of coins & stamps, and curios.

Bourse chairman, Rod Paul, 20 Clinton St., Concord, expects to have over 30 dealers in coins and stamps etc. on hand. There will be a special cachet and postmark for the Tri-State Postal Station with Mrs. Arthur Murnough, 24 Bridge St., Pittsfield, N.H. in charge. The station will sell back issues of stamps at face.

Fred McPhail, Keene, will conduct an auction of coins at 7 P.M. Saturday evening. Brochures with exhibit classes, schedule, etc. are available from Gordon Hill, RFD, Tilton. N. H. or Wayne S. Rich, Concord.

N.H.N.A. FALL MEETING OCT. 11

The Fall meeting of New Hampshire Numismatic Assn. will be held at the YMCA Senior Center, 20 South Main St., Concord, N. H. on Oct. 11 in conjunction with New Hampshire Collectors' Club meeting which starts at 2PM. There will be a flea market where anyone may buy or sell coins, stamps, etc.

It is hoped that Nashua Coin Club or other group will be ready with a bid for the 1982 Spring show of NHPA.

SEED DUES TO NEW TREASURER

NENA dues of \$1.00 per year may now be sent to Treasurer James Rolston, Box 37, Greenland, N.H. 03840. An X beside your name on the outside of Nonagon indicates your dues are not up to date. Many pay several years at a time.

NEW ENGLAND NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION

1981 NENA Convention is Dec. 11-13 at Sheraton Hartford Hotel, Hartford, Conn.

PRECIOUS METALS BILL SENT TO INTERIM STUDY BY STATE

The New Hampshire House passed a bill which would have required anyone selling coins or any precious metal to be finger printed. Dealers would have been required to have a license from both state and local community, hold the precious metal for 10 days, and keep detailed records available to law enforcement and other officials.

A group of dealers formed the New Hampshire Precious Metals Association to fight this legislation. Officers elected were President John Alward, Goffstown, Vice President, Robert Lavoie, Manchester, Secretary Pat Troplano, Auburn; treasurer, John Huff, Salem. Directors, Bruce Breton, Nashua, Wayne Rich, Concord, and Robert Emond, Laconia plus the officers.

A lobbyist was hired by the association to advise and assist in defeating the bill in the Senate. Several members felt that some sort of bill on this subject will be passed eventually and that the right bill would help to eliminate the fly-by-night operators in motels who come from out of state. Rich, who served in the N.H. House for six years worked up a substitute bill with advice and assistance of other PMA members, which was presented at the Senate hearing. NHMA President Fred McPhail, Dick Dolloff, Alward, Emond, Rich, and several others testified against the House bill and presented the substitute bill endorsed by N.H. Precious Metals Assoc.

The senate vote to sent the bill to interim study is a temporary victory but due to the work of the NH PMA New Hampshire collectors and dealers are much better off than in many state where stringent laws have been passed. The New Hampshire Precious Metals association would appreciate your support in continuing efforts to oppose the original House bill and support a good bill. Thanks are due John Alward and other officers and the many others who turned out for the Senate hearing in their support.

Editor Wayne S. Rich, Box 391, Concord,
N.H. 03301 would appreciate material for use
in future Nonagons,

NEW ENGLAND NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION REPORT BY JIM ROLSTON, DIRECTOR

The 37th Conference and Convention of New England Numismatic Association Dec. 11-Dec. 13 at Sheraton-Hartford Hotel, Hartford, Conn. will have 58 dealers with bourse tables offering a wide selection of material. Trophies are offered in many exhibit categories. President and General Chairman Sally Kirka has planned many fun and educational activities. Write her at 116 Oak St., Manchester, Conn. for more information on exhibiting or other matters.

Paul F. Hojlo Jr., Nashua, was elected as New Hampshire State Director to fill out Jim Rolston's term since he is now a regular director slated to be 1982 President and chairman of the 1982 NENA Convention to be held in Merrimack, N.H. at the new Sheraton Hotel there, hosted by New Hampshire Numismatic Association. Anyone who is willing to assist Jim by serving on the committee for this event should contact him at Box 37, Greenland, N.H. 03840.

NUMISMATIC CALENDAR

Sept. 17-20, Nashua Mall, Exit 6 from Everett Turnpike, big mall show, 20 dealers.

Sept. 19-20 Maine Numismatic Assn. Fall Show, Holiday Inn, 88 Spring St., Portland, across from Cumberland County Civic Center, with bourse, exhibits, and auctions.

Sept. 27, 4th Sunday Show, Holiday Inn, Exit 4 from Everett Turnpike, Nashua.

Oct. 1-3 Newington Mall, near Portsmouth.
Oct. 1, 1st Sunday Show, Holiday Inn, "

Oct. 11, 9 A.M. - 3 P.M. Jaffrey, N.H.
at John Humiston Post, 28 Webster St.

Oct. 17-18 TRISTATE COLLECTORS' Exhibition, Concord Community Ctr, 39 Green St. Bourse, exhibits, auction, Postal station.

Dec. 11-13 37th NENA Convention at Sheraton-Hartford, Hartford, Conn.

Nov. 12, 13, 14, 1982, 38th NENA Convention, Sheraton Hotel, Merrimack, N.H.

SYLVESTER SAGE CROSBY
1831-1914

Sylvester Sage Crosby, born Sept. 2, 1831, in Charlestown, N. H. was author of the monumental classic, "The Early Coins of America". Robert I. Wester, MNA member, and proud owner of the author's personal original proof copy of the book thought it would be appropriate to recognize the 150th anniversary of the birth of this outstanding N.H. numismatist with articles honoring him in the Numismatic press. A two page extract of Wester's twenty page manuscript appears in the Sept. 1981 Numismatist. We feel that Wester's extensive research and information deserves a place in the NONAGON.

Sylvester's father, the Reverend Jaazaniah Crosby, born in Hebron, N.H. Apr. 3, 1780 walked eighty miles to Phillips Exeter Academy to begin his education at age 18, paying all the expenses of his journey with three shillings and nine pence (62¢). After 2 years at Exeter he entered Harvard, graduating in 1804. He became pastor in Charlestown in 1810 of the church later known as South Parish Unitarian Church. He married Anne Parker of Wolfeboro, N.H. in 1811, who died a year and a half later following birth of a daughter Elizabeth.

Nov. 13, 1814 Rev. Crosby married Huldah Robinson Sage, daughter of Rev. Sylvester Sage of Westminster, Vt. They had 10 children. The sixth child was named Sylvester Sage Crosby, but he died Apr. 7, 1825 at 13 months of age. Their ninth child, born Sept. 2, 1831 was also named Sylvester Sage Crosby in honor of his maternal grandfather, as it was customary in those days to give the name of a child dying in infancy to a later child. Harvard College conferred the degree, Doctor of Divinity, on Rev. Crosby in 1853. He wrote "The Annals of Charlestown", found in N. H. Historical Society collections.

Sylvester established a watchmaking business in Charlestown at the age of 17. Later he joined other members of his family in Cambridge, Mass. and established a watchmaking and jewelry business at 43 West st, in Boston. He married Mary Elizabeth Capelle in Charlestown, N. H. Sept. 1, 1855. A man of many interests, Sylvester cultivated mushrooms, and enjoyed archaeology and astronomy. His Astronomer's telescope was presented to Proctor Academy's observatory in Andover, N.H.

Appearing in the American Journal of Numismatics in April of 1869 was a masterly and exhaustive article by Sylvester Crosby on the "Cents of 1793". Later in 1897, "The United States Coinage of 1793 Cents and 'half Cents'" was published. However, his "The Early Coins of America", published in 1875 is the work which was most outstanding. It was immediately recognized as the standard reference on American Colonial coins in auction catalogs, and it is still in demand today as a third reprinting in recent years indicates.

Sylvester received his honorary membership in The American Numismatic Society on March 21, 1876 and was honored again by that society in 1930, being the only American of six numismatic scholars to have his name cut into the frieze of the front facade of the society's new addition. The American Numismatic Association admitted him to Honorary membership on Sept. 4, 1907 and elected him to the Numismatic Hall of Fame in 1970. Dec. 20, 1908 the Boston Numismatic Society made him an honorary member.

Sylvester at one time owned a prooflike presentation chain cent of 1793 known to large cent collectors as "The Coin". He also purchased from the Dr. Charles Clay collection a Washington trial piece which came from the widow of Dr. Hancock, diecutter and medalist from Birmingham, England, a piece which proved the origin of the 1791 Washington cents. Of all the prized coins in Sylvester's cabinet, the 1783 1000 Mill pattern dollar, America's first, is the one Sylvester was apparently extremely fond of. It is embossed in gold on the cover of the Morocco bound presentation copy of his "The Early Coins of America".

Sylvester died Aug. 18, 1914 and was buried in Lexington, Mass. with his second wife, Mahitable Ackers Crosby, 1832 - 1907. Surviving were a niece and nephew.

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